

Research Article

Evaluating the Efficacy of the Remedial Program: A Three-year Trend Analysis (2023-2025)

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Abstract

Remedial education is basic catch-up education that is designed to address learning gaps to students who have fallen below minimum standards. Remedial learning usually focuses on reteaching basic knowledge and skills to reach standardized benchmarks for typical students of a certain age. Considering this concept in to account, the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia starts to give remedial program for those students who could not fulfill the minimum standard to join in to Higher Education Institutions. This article therefore, is designed to assess the three-year trend analysis (2023–2025) on the effectiveness of Ethiopia’s remedial higher education program, designed to bridge gaps for students not meeting higher education institutions entry requirements. The study reveals a sharp decline in both enrollment and pass rates over this period. While initial pass rates were promising (80.9% in private institutions in 2023), they plummeted to 24.1% in private and 56.3% in public institutions by 2025. Key drivers include policy shifts regarding cut-off scores, student preference for public institutions, and a critical change in assessment methodology-shifting from a blended (30% institutional/70% central) to a fully centralized (100%) exam system. This change exposed previously masked issues such as institutional grade inflation and inadequate student preparation, particularly in private institutions. The report concludes that the program’s credibility and effectiveness are under severe threat. It urges immediate reforms, including enhanced quality assurance, standardized competency-based assessments, addressing public-private performance disparities, and increasing transparency to ensure the program fulfills its purpose of developing genuine student competency.

Keywords

Remedial Program, Competency, Trend Analysis, Efficacy

1. Introduction

Remedial education is a focused teaching strategy that helps students catch up when they fall behind in the standard. It aims to fill specific learning gaps so these students can keep pace with their classmates [6]. This kind of support isn’t just for a certain type of student, anyone who misses key foundational skills can benefit, no matter the reason [7].

You might also hear remedial education called by other

names, such as compensatory education [1], developmental education [2] preparatory education [4], academic upgrading [3], or remedial programs [6].

The benefits of these programs go beyond just better grades. Research by [8] found that remedial courses positively affect students’ academic, social, psychological, financial, and career development. As students do better in school, they also

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learn to use their free time productively, improve their social skills, gain confidence, and understand their own strengths and limits.

The value of remedial education became even clearer during the COVID-19 pandemic, [5] studied how schools shifted to online learning during lockdown. They pointed out that while institutions tried to adapt, students would likely face ongoing challenges especially in areas like peer support and remedial teaching—which are crucial for maintaining quality education in an online setting.

In case of Ethiopia, since 2023, the remedial program has been introduced in the Ethiopian higher education system to provide opportunities for students who are unable to meet the university entry requirements. This happens because, considering the potential negative impact caused by the exam administration system for grade 12 being different from previous practices, the policy requiring a 50% and above passing mark for grade 12 has entered into implementation. This makes the number of students who scored 50% and above minimal, necessitating the use of remediation as a bridge instead of directly admitting students who did not achieve the passing mark (below 50%) to higher education institutions. The effort is expected to improve education quality; to reduce the potential negative impact on students, families, teachers, society, and the country by increasing students' opportunity to enter higher education institutions; to follow a fair and rational problem-solving system to prevent the decline and deterioration of education quality; and to give another chance to students who have the capacity but scored low due to various reasons.

The Ministry then decided to put cut points for the remedial program entry point, and students who fulfill the criteria are eligible to enter both private and public higher education institutions. The remedial students will stay in higher educa-

tion institutions for six months and will take assessments to check whether they have achieved the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude towards joining higher education. Consequently, 30% of the assessment was given by the institution in which they attended their training, and 70% of the assessment was given by the Ministry at the central level.

2. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental research design to conduct a three-year trend analysis (2023-2025) of the efficacy of the remedial program. The primary objective was to assess trends in enrollment, completion, and pass rates to evaluate the program's overall impact on student competency. The research used a secondary data analysis approach. The data were extracted from the official administrative records and annual reports. These records constituted the complete population data for all students enrolled in the remedial program Private Higher Education Institutions (PrHEIs) in Ethiopia during the 2023, 2024, and 2025 academic years.

The analysis was primarily descriptive and comparative. The data were organized and summarized using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) presented in tabular form. A trend analysis was performed by comparing the year-on-year changes in the key variables. A critical comparative analysis was conducted between public and private HEIs to identify performance disparities. As the study relied exclusively on publicly available, aggregated, and non-identifiable secondary data, issues of individual confidentiality and informed consent were mitigated. The analysis presents the data objectively to ensure an accurate representation of the program's trends.

3. Result

Table 1. Summary of remedial results in Private Higher Education Institutions (2023-2025).

Year	No Institutions	Students Registereid	Students Sat on Exam	Students passed	Pass Rate
2023	236	40,801	36,800 (90.2%)	29,800	80.9%
2024	135	31,515	26,526 (84.2%)	19,658	74.1%
2025	77	11,743	9,862 (84%)	2,379	24.1%
Total		84,059	73,188	51,837	70.8%

Table 1 above shows the number of remedial students registered in private higher education institutions who completed their program and sat for the remedial exam and the number of remedial students who got a passing mark (50% and above) to join higher education in three consecutive years. In sum

84,059 students were registered to attend remedial programs in private higher education institutions. Among them, 73,188 completed their study and sat for the final exam, while the remaining 10,871 (12.9%) dropped out of their education in the middle. Fifty-one thousand eight hundred thirty-seven

(70.8%) of students scored 50% and above, which enabled them to join higher education institutions.

The table above also shows the enrollment rate of remedial students is declining. This happens probably due to the preference of students for where to attend their remedial education. At the beginning students thought they could attend remedial education in private higher education institutions and join public higher education after they score a passing mark. However, they found it is not possible. As a result, many students preferred to attend their remedial program in public higher education institutions, since they were unable to pay for their degree in private higher education institutions.

However, the enrollment and pass rate of remedial students

in 2024/25, as shown in [Table 1](#), decrease exponentially. The decrease in enrollment is related to the cut point set by the ministry to attend the remedial program. Previously, a special cut point, which was below the cut point of public higher education, was made in 2022 and 2023. However, in 2025 a fixed cut point for both private and public higher education was set, and more students joined public higher education than private higher education. Consequently, the remedial enrollment in private higher education was decreased compared to previous years. The pass rate of remedial students in 2023 and 2024 was more than 70% in both private higher education and public higher education. However, in 2025, the pass rate of remedial students decreased significantly, as shown in [Table 2](#) below.

Table 2. The pass rate of remedial students per institution type. (2025).

Institution type	Total students who sat on exam	Total students passed	Pass Rate
Public	61,866	34,836	56.3%
Private	9,862	2,379	24.1%
Total	71, 728	37,215	48.0%

[Table 2](#) shows that 61, 866 (86.3%) of students who attend a remedial program were from public higher education institutions, while only 9,862 (13.7%) remedial students attend their education in private higher education institutions. Moreover, 34,836 (56.32%) of the remedial students who scored 50% and above are from public higher education institutions, while 2,379 (24.1%) of the remedial students from private higher education institutions scored 50% and above. In sum, 37,215 (51.87%) of the remedial students who attend the remedial program in 2024/25 score 50% and above, which enables them to join higher education.

Why Discrepancies in the Exam Result?

There might be many reasons to justify why discrepancies happened in the previous two years, including students who got 50% or above in the remedial exam and the 2025 result. The first reason is that the assessment system has changed. Previously, the institutes had the privilege to assess their remedial students out of 30%, and they were considered in the overall assessment, and students took the exam given in the center, which counted for 70%. However, In 2024/25, the ministry decided that students shall take the exam from the center, and the result will be based on 100%. The role of the institutions was to make students competent in the given syllabus.

This implies that institutions were providing results out of 30%, probably not assessed well. Institutions could not strictly follow the assessment rules, which are designed to enhance the competency of students; rather, they gave a maximum of 30% just to help their students to join higher education. Therefore, it is strongly advising both private and public higher education institutions on how they are training,

assessing, and making remedial students competent so as to fulfill the minimum requirements to join in higher education.

4. Conclusion

Based on the three-year trend analysis (2023-2025) of Ethiopia's remedial higher education program, the following key conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) Program viability under threat: the remedial program has experienced a steep and concerning decline in both enrollment and pass rates over three years. While initial results (2023: 80.9% pass rate in PrHEIs) showed promise, the 2025 pass rate plummeted to 24.1% in private institutions and 56.3% in public institutions (overall 48.0%). This happens because there is significantly fewer students enrolled in private remedial programs, largely due to students realizing they could not use private remedial completion to enter public universities and an inability to afford subsequent private degree costs. Policy changes (shift from special to fixed cut points for HE entry) also diverted students towards public institutions for remediation. The catastrophic drop in 2025 pass rates is primarily attributed to the Ministry's assessment reform. Shifting from a blended model (30% institutional assessment 70% central exam) to a 100% centralized exam in 2024/25 exposed potential weaknesses. Evidence suggests institutions previously awarded inflated marks for their 30% component, artificially boosting pass rates and masking true com-

petency levels. The drastic pass rate drop under centralized assessment indicates remedial programs, particularly in private institutions, are failing to adequately prepare students to meet the required standards independently.

- 2) Public vs. private disparity: in 2025, public remedial institutions achieved a 56.3% pass rate, while private institutions only achieved 24.1%. This suggests systemic differences in program quality, student preparedness, or institutional practices between the sectors.
- 3) Core concern-competency development: the 2025 results raise serious doubts about the program's effectiveness in consistently improving student competency to meet minimum HE entry requirements. The heavy reliance on institutional assessment previously obscured this issue. The findings necessitate immediate and rigorous action which focus on enhanced quality control. The Ministry must strengthen oversight of remedial program delivery, teaching quality, and adherence to competency-building objectives in all institutions (public and private). The move to 100% centralized assessment appears justified to ensure result credibility, but its implementation and impact require careful monitoring. By addressing the root causes, investigate and address the specific factors leading to the poor preparation of students, especially in private institutions, and the previous leniency in institutional grading. Moreover, re-evaluate policies regarding student flow between remedial programs (public/private) and subsequent degree programs to address enrollment drivers.

5. Recommendations

Based on the three-year trend analysis of Ethiopia's Private Higher Education Institutions remedial program (2023-2025), the following comprehensive recommendations are proposed to address the critical decline in enrollment and pass rates, ensure program effectiveness, and restore credibility:

- 1) Strengthen quality assurance & program delivery: it is complementary to develop and enforce a national competency framework for remedial programs, including standardized syllabi, minimum teaching hours, and required instructor qualifications (applied equally to public and private institutions). Moreover, conduct unannounced inspections of remedial programs to verify adherence to curriculum, teaching quality, and assessment integrity and implement mandatory teacher training on competency-based pedagogy and ethical assessment practices, with certification.
- 2) Reform assessment practices: maintain the 100% centralized final exam to ensure credibility, but address preparation gaps and release detailed exemplar papers and grading rubrics before exams and provide diagnostic feedback to institutions on student performance trends.

- 3) Address public-private disparities: tie institutional funding (for public) and accreditation (for private) to student competency outcomes, not enrollment numbers. Facilitate mentorship programs where high-performing public institutions support struggling private providers in curriculum design and teacher training.
- 4) Revise student pathway policies: publish explicit guidelines stating that remedial completion in private institutions permits entry to public universities, contingent on passing the centralized exam. This counters student reluctance to enroll privately.
- 5) Enhance transparency & accountability: publish annual institution-level performance dashboards (enrollment, pass rates, dropout rates) on the Ministry's website to inform student choice.
- 6) Longitudinal tracking: monitor post-remedial success and track university performance of remedial graduates versus direct entrants. Report comparative data on retention rates and GPA to identify urgent priorities for the next academic year.

Author Contributions

Eyob Ayenew is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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